

**Statement By
National Coalition for Food and
Agricultural Research**

**Before The
First Listening session
Thursday, July 12, 2001
Lancaster, PA**

Thank you, for soliciting the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR) input and comments on the effectiveness of existing agricultural research, education, and extension programs administered by CSREES in meeting current and future challenges to the United States' food and agriculture system. I am Joe Coffey, a retired executive of Southern States Cooperative of Richmond, Virginia and Secretary/Treasurer of the National C-FAR.

National C-FAR is a newly organized broad-based stakeholder coalition of some 90 food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation and natural resource organizations. (List of membership is attached).

We welcome others here to join with us in support of the goal of doubling of federal funding of food, nutrition, agriculture, natural resource, and fiber research, extension and education programs during the next five years. This is to be net additional funding on a continuing basis that complements, not competes with or displaces the existing portfolio of federal programs of research and education.

In our comments today, we offer our perspective on four important questions:

- 1) Why should the federal government invest in food and agricultural research, extension and education?
- 2) What have been the measurable benefits of federal investments for American farmers and consumers?
- 3) Why should we double federal investments in food and agricultural research over the next 5 years?
- 4) How should the doubled funds be invested?

1) Why Should The Federal Government Invest In Food And Agricultural Research, Extension And Education?

The federal government should invest in food and agricultural research and education because the food and agriculture sector is fundamentally important to the U.S. and the private sector lacks incentive to invest in research and education in a number of important areas. The food and agriculture sector contributes in many ways -- provides food, creates jobs and income, reduces the trade deficit, contributes to quality of life, provides stewardship of our natural resources, and bolsters national security.

Public financed research should complement private research by focusing in areas where the private sector does not have an incentive to invest. Examples of areas where private firms are not likely to have sufficient incentive and public support may be warranted include such areas as: 1) basic science and fundamental knowledge, 2) environmental quality, 3) food safety and security, 4) understanding agricultural systems, 5) economic opportunity and quality of life in farming and rural communities and 6) public health.

2) What Have Been The Measurable Benefits Of Federal Investments For American Farmers And Consumers?

Investments in food and agricultural research have returned enormous benefits to the American people. According to a recent analysis by the International Food Policy Research Institute of nearly 300 studies, spanning a half century, and involving nearly 2,000 separate estimates, the median annual rate of return on public investments in food and agricultural research and extension was a whopping 44% -- an extremely high rate of return equivalent to a payback of \$7 or more dollars for every dollar invested.

Advances in agricultural productivity have contributed to enhancing the environment and the quality of life. Research in food safety and human nutrition has discovered how foods can prevent various diseases and ensure a healthy and productive society.

3) Why Should We Double Food And Agricultural Research?

We should double food and agricultural research in the next five years for three basic reasons: First, despite past progress and contributions, many challenges remain. Second, federal funding of food and agricultural research has been essentially flat for two decades, the scientific base upon which food and agriculture advances have been built is at risk. Third, there will be the opportunities lost and goals not achieved unless there is increased support.

Agricultural research and education can address many of the pressing problems such as: World food demand is escalating. Some \$100 billion of annual U.S. health costs are linked to poor diets and food borne pathogens. Farmers are suffering from some of the lowest prices in over two decades. We need longer term approaches to the assist farmers add and retain value of their commodities. We can reduce the threats to our environment and improve sustainability by developing more environmentally friendly practices. Energy costs are escalating. Agriculture provides the potential for renewable sources of energy and cleaner burning fuels that will reduce our dependence upon rising petroleum prices and imports. We need improved bio-security and bio-safety tools to protect against bio-terrorism and dreaded problems such as foot-and-mouth and "mad cow" diseases and other exotic plant and animal pests.

We may be at risk of falling behind research in other countries. Federal funding of food and agricultural research has been flat. It has declined relative to all federal research and relative to agricultural research in the rest of the world. Federal funding of food and agricultural research in the USDA, measured in real (inflation-adjusted) dollars is less than it was in 1978.

Public funding of agricultural research in the rest of the world during 1971-1993 increased nearly 30% faster than in the U.S. Currently, we only invest about \$1 of federal funds of food and agricultural research per every \$500 of consumer expenditures of food and fiber - a very low rate indeed.

Expanding Opportunities

The third reason, but perhaps most important one, for doubling food and agricultural research is to capitalize upon the promising opportunities that advances in science and technology make possible. Advances in science and technology are opening the way to tremendous opportunities such as the sequencing of the human, plant, and animal genomes. Taking advantage of these

unprecedented biotechnological advances will require significant increases in research funding.

We believe increased funding of food and agricultural research will result in:

- Safer, more nutritious, higher quality, more convenient and affordable foods
- More efficient and environmentally friendly food, fiber and forest production
- Improved water quality, resource conservation and environment
- Less dependence on non-renewable sources of energy
- New and improved products, expanded global competitiveness and improved balance of trade
- More jobs and sustainable rural economic development
- Better protection for our agricultural and natural resources from new, emerging, and imported plant pests and animal diseases

4) How Should the Doubled Funds Be Spent?

Areas of Opportunity

National C-FAR has not developed a list of specific research and education recommendations. However, major areas of research and education opportunities that have been identified by our members and related coalitions include:

- Food security, safety, fortification, enrichment and allergens
- Nutrition and public health
- Production quantity and quality; nutrient adequacy; global competitiveness; and new market opportunities
- Environmental stewardship and resource conservation and the scientific basis for public policies relating to the environment, plants and animals
- Increasing knowledge, skills, and expertise
- Emergency preparedness for emerging plant and animal diseases and bio-terrorism
- Product pioneering for food, nutrition, biobased materials and biofuels
- Genetic resources, genetic knowledge, and biotechnology
- Jobs and rural community economic vitality

- Education and outreach to producers, processors and consumers including food safety, sound nutrition, conservation, management, and new technology

Building Capacity and a Balanced Portfolio

National C-FAR emphasizes the continuing need to build the capacity to do quality research and education. We must maintain a balanced portfolio of federal research and education programs, including competitive grants, formula funds and intramural programs.

Legislation

With respect to current legislation, National C-FAR recommends that:

- 1) The basic authorizations and provisions of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 be extended and incorporated in the new farm bill
- 2) An additional provision be included that it is the sense of Congress that federal funding of research, extension, and education be doubled over the next five years
- 3) The provisions be strengthened to expand stakeholder participation in identifying research and education funding needs and opportunities
- 4) The current definition of "food and agricultural sciences" be broadened to include expanded global market opportunities and protection from exotic weed, insect or disease organisms.
- 5) The various food and agricultural research programs throughout the federal government be more clearly identified and their coordination be improved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope we have convinced you that:

- 1) Food and agriculture is an important sector that merits federal attention and support.
- 2) Food and agricultural research and education have paid huge dividends in the past, not just to farmers, but to the entire nation and the world.
- 3) There is an appropriate and recognized definable role for federal support of research and education.

4) Federal investments in food and agricultural research should be doubled over the next 5 years.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to working with you in support of enhancing federal support of food and agricultural research and education.

National C-FAR
Membership List
June 20, 2001

National Members

American Crop Protection Association
American Dietetic Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Meat Institute Foundation
American Seed Trade Association
American Society for Nutritional Sciences
American Soybean Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
American Vintners Association
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Biotechnology Industry Organization
CARET
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Consortium for Sustainable Agriculture
 Research and Education (CSARE)
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Forest Landowners Association
Institute of Food Technologists
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain & Feed Association
National Pork Producers Council
Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
U.S. Rice Producers Association
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